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Educational Television Series 1968-69

Teachers' Guide

History SENIOR DIVISION

The World of Pieter Bruegel

Educational Television Branch
ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
1670 Bayview Avenue, Toronto 17

HISTORY
Senior Division

THE WORLD OF PIETER BRUEGEL

1 program, 30 minutes in length

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Evaluations of the program, reports on the results of pedagogical techniques used, and inquiries, may be directed to:

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Social Sciences,
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ETV Branch,
1670 Bayview Avenue,
Toronto 17.

THE WORLD OF PIETER BRUEGEL

What was it like to be alive in 16th century Europe? — to be alive, to be able to see the physical and social environment through the eyes of an artist-philosopher? That is not the same thing as to ask what 16th-century Europe was like. But a confrontation with the paintings, drawings, and engravings of Pieter Bruegel may provoke exciting discovery in the area of both questions, and such a confrontation may also inspire some insights into the world of the 20th century, and even, perhaps, into the human condition itself.

THE APPROACH

Discovery is "the name of the game". The program is not meant to be an authoritative statement. Rather, it is an audio-visual essay, designed to invite participation by the viewers in the exploration of the world of Pieter Bruegel. To that end, a short filmstrip, containing examples, in colour, of Bruegel's paintings, accompanies this guide. (One per school.)

The program was developed on a foundation of discovery. Small groups of students were shown a series of colour slides and asked to comment on what they saw. The discussion was recorded, and certain sections of the recorded conversation were selected. Then various images from the paintings were filmed and matched to the themes which emerged during the discussions. Finally, music was added to emphasize the themes.

THE THEMES

The themes which take on some prominence during the program include environment as a vital force, peasant life, human frailty, military and political force in human affairs, the centrality of religion, and the inner life of man, including his dreams and his delusions. What else may be discovered in Bruegel no one can say with certainty. There is ample room for speculation about Bruegel's philosophy and religious outlook, and for conjecture about his views on political events in the Netherlands during his lifetime. Some pictures are clearly allegorical and didactic. Others are mystifying. Is there something symbolic about every picture he painted? Why does he, often, so fill his canvasses with people, with activity, with detail, that one is forced to search for the subject?

THE HISTORICAL BRUEGEL

Little is known of Bruegel's life. Born about 1525, he lived most of his 44 years in the Flemish cities of Antwerp and Brussels. He visited Italy, and images from that expedition recur in many of his paintings and engravings. It is known that many of his early works were prepared for engravers. Therefore, he occupies a place in early history of the print medium which was to put pictures as well as text in the hands of a much wider clientele than ever before. His works can also, of course, be viewed in the context of the Renaissance and of the Reformation.

SUGGESTED PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1. There may be some merit in having the class discuss the prominent characteristics or trends of 16th century Europe, perhaps with special reference to the Netherlands, but not to Bruegel himself.

2. Having one or two students look into Bruegel's career could provide a source of informed comment in any discussion that develops after the program has been seen.

3. Such groundwork on the part of a few selected students could perhaps be motivated by their viewing the film-strip. It seems doubtful that an entire class should view the film-strip before the program is seen. If such an experiment with one class out of several is carried out, however, the ETV Branch would welcome the teacher's assessment of the result.

SUGGESTED POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1. View the film-strip enclosed with this guide. The teacher may wish to have the class continue the process of exploration by freely discussing content and significance of the pictures, agreeing or disagreeing with views expressed in the program.

2. List theses which the class can discuss on the basis of evidence from the program, the film-strip, or the bibliography. Examples — some of which are quotations from the program — are:
   - "I think he was trying to make people think, and has shown the faults of men."
   - "I don't think he has any strong religious convictions."
   - "He never paints the aristocracy."
   - "Bruegel is a very cynical person, and very bitter with the whole society."
   - "I think Bruegel paints what he sees in front of him."
   - "In life we can turn away from deformities. These kind of people we lock up. But Bruegel painted them (so that) we can't turn our eyes away..."
   - "He creates in my mind the picture of an age which is seething with injustice and unrest and oppression and war and violence and materialism."
   - "He is saying that nature is beautiful."
   - "Bruegel is no idealizer." (Question: Who are the idealizers?)
   - In Bruegel's paintings, we are looking at the European world of the 16th century.
   - In Bruegel's paintings, we are looking at our own world, the way it is.
   - In Bruegel's paintings, we are looking at man's two worlds — the inner one, and the outer one.

SUGGESTED INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES

Literature and music, as well as art, reflect the people and the temper of any period in history. In order to immerse the student in as many aspects as possible of 16th century Europe, and particularly the Netherlands, the following activities might be used. Viewing selected frames of the

filmstrip would contribute much to each activity. It is hoped that other subject departments — English, music and art — of secondary schools might be involved in co-operative activity such as large group instruction with team-teaching.

1. A study in depth and breadth of Bruegel, the artist, his art and his role as social commentator could be undertaken in the art classes. The art teacher might adopt and adapt some of the activities and themes suggested in the history section of this guide.

   His students could express themselves visually, as well as verbally, about such themes as:

   — Bruegel as a social commentator,

   — the students as a contemporary social commentator,

   — an imaginative look at the inner and outer worlds of man,

   — the student's feeling about Sixteenth-century life,

   — art as fact and fancy.

   In addition to these topics, the art student might:

   — Examine the fantastic in art by looking at Bruegel's work in relation to the work of other artists, past and present, e.g. Bosch, Durer, Dali, Picasso, etc.

   — Compare Bruegel's view of life with that of Krieghoff's, by viewing and discussing the film, "Jolifou Inn," (National Film Board).

   — Discuss Bruegel's style in relation to the Italian Renaissance; his use of symbolism; his use of the high horizon.

2. Study some of the writers of this period and their works — the prose, poetry, drama, in Europe and particularly, the Netherlands.

   With the cooperation of the Consul-General of the Netherlands' Consulate, Toronto, the following information was made available:

   Selections from "A Sampling of Dutch Literature", Garmt Stuiveling, (translated and adapted by James Brockway), Radio Nederland Wereldomroep.

This sonnet was written by Pieter Corniliszoon Hooft (1581-1647) of Amsterdam, who is considered the greatest Dutch lyrical poet of this period:

My love, my love, thus spoke my love to me,
While on her delicate lips my lips were browsing.
Those words, too clear to be in need of glozing,
Entered my ears and stirred mysteriously
My inmost thoughts into tumultuous stress
They did not trust the ear and at their pressure
I begged my dearest for a fuller measure
Of that confession, and she did confess.

Oh bounty of the heart that overflows!
Entranced, each heart did th'other's heart imprison.
But when the morning star fled for the risen
Light of the sun, the sad truth too arose:
Oh, Gods, how close are things that are and seem!
How like the dream is life, like life the dream!

Although written in Holland's Golden Age, 17-century, this comic poem by Gerbrand Adriaenszoom Bredero, relates well to Bruegel's paintings, "Carnival and Lent", "Peasant Dance", and "Peasant Wedding".

A PEASANTS' PARTY

Arnold Peter Gilson, and Matthew, Jack, and Jane,
And Nicholas and Colin, they sallied forth in train
To the village of Vinkeveen
For old Bill Bruce had given his goose
For the game of catch-the-crane.

Arnold Peter Gilson he had a stately gait.
His hat of velveteen stood pert upon his pate,
Aslant, and black as slate.
He wore it near across one ear.
It stood at half-past eight.

But Matthew, and Janie, and Jack and Jock and Gene,
They were still-accoutred as their parents had been,
In red, in white, in green,
In greyish hue, in purple, in blue,
Like countryfolk, I mean.

Arrived in Vinkeveen, among the jostle and jam,
They found there Cornelius, and Tony and John Scram,
And Dirck of Diemerdam,
And Simon Sniff, and John the Stiff,
With Mat and Nerie Bam.

The girls from Vinkeveen and all that bailiwick,
My, how they'd polish their finest silver rig!
Oh boys, they looked so slick!
But fancy, Neltje had got her belt
From tall Matilda on tick!

They joined the company, and oh, the goings-on,
The drinking, the singing, the dancing and can-can,
They money lost and won.
They called for wine, that was in line.
Each bumpkin was a Don.

But Matthew and Katie, that sweet and simple lass,
These two sneaked together into the new-mown grass,
Not to say morning mass!
You know their game, it is ever the same.
I thought it was a farce.

Reckless Ernie Gilson was first to pull his jack
Against Peter Sorhead with many a hew and a hack.
And baldpate Brent came back
With a pitchfork dash, but got a gash
With others of his pack.

The lasses they beat it, not liking that debate.
There was a wild clatter of pewter, platter and plate.
But Colin he was great:
He slashed about, and killed a lout,
Who fell with cloven pate.

Simon seized the poker, and the settle of solid oak,
And flung them bang at Eben and at another bloke.
The missiles flew and broke
With might and main through panel and pan.
I left those crazy folk.

Ye gentlemen, ye burghers, who don't carouse and reel,
Shun the peasant's parties, they are never so genteel
But there is blood to spill.
Join me and mine in a jug of wine,
And steer an even keel.

THE SONG OF THE CHURLS

This anonymous Flemish ballad, although developed during medieval times, was probably passed on and would be heard being sung by the peasants of the 16th century.

Let us sing of the Churls. Their hordes
Would make the devil afeared.
They would subdue the lords.
They wear an unkempt beard.
Their ragged clothes are fit for a sty.
Their hats too small for their heads.
Their hoods are all awry.

Their hose and shoes are worn to shreds.
With bread and cheese and curd and gruel
All day they stuff their guts.
It makes the churl a fool:
He never eats but gluts.

To the kermis goes the lout.
Then he thinks himself a duke.
And there he lays about
With a rusty stave or crook.
He starts to drink of the wine,
And in his drunken drawl
He sings, "The world is mine,
City, land and all."
With bread and cheese and curd and gruel
All day they stuff their guts.
It makes the churl a fool:
He never eats but gluts.

Then he will treat the boys
To the bagpipe's tirrelirit.
Lord, what a hellish noise,
For decent ears unfit.
They jump to their feet and dance.
Their long beards bounce as well,
They stamp and run and prance.
God send them all to hell.
With bread and cheese and curd and gruel
All day they stuff their guts.
It makes the churl a fool:
He never eats but gluts.

Joost van den Vondel, the poet, lived in the raucous, bustling city of Amsterdam and praises the glory of his city.

ON AMSTELREDAM

On the Amstel, on the waters, she stands, resplendent town,
She who as Empress wears proud Europe's shining crown!
Amstelredam, who lifts her brow to heaven's arches
And shoots, on Pluto's breast, her long roots through the marshes.
What waters have not borne the shadow of her sails?
What markets have not seen her wares burst from the bales?
What race beneath the moon knows not her lips' decrees,
She, who herself prescribes the law to the Seven Seas?
She spreads her pinion wide, by rich increase of souls,
And tugs the world inside, in overflowing hulls.
Prosperity shall be hers, if her Council, bold and wise,
Keep the Clergy in their place and their bandage from its eyes.

During the struggle against Spain, a great many patriotic songs were written. Here is the first verse of, "O Nederland let op Uw Soelk", in which the Prince of Orange calls on his countrymen to defend their hard-won freedom against Spanish trickery.

Oh Holland take heed, guard well your cause,
The time, the hour, is near.
Lest you lose the freedom which is yours
The which I do aver
Your fathers have so dearly bought
To make it yours for aye.
That costly prize they have not sought
For you to yield away.

One of the most famous marching songs, "Wilhelmus", by an anonymous author (about 1670), became Holland's National Anthem, the oldest anthem of any European country. Here are some of the verses.

WILHELMUS

William of Nassau, scion
Of a Dutch and ancient line,
I dedicate undying
Faith to this land of mine.
A prince I am, undaunted,
Of Orange, ever free.
To the King of Spain I've granted
A lifelong loyalty.

A shield and my reliance,
O God, Thou ever wert.
I'll trust unto Thy guidance,
O leave me not ungirt,
That I may stay a pious
Servant of Thine for aye,
And drive the plagues that try us
And tyranny away.

Nothing so moves my pity
As seeing through these lands
Field, village, town and city
Pillaged by roving bands.
O that the Spaniards rape thee,
My Netherland so sweet,
The thought of that doth grip me,
Causing my heart to bleed.

Unto the Lord His Power
I do confession make
That ne'er at any hour
Ill of the King I spake.
But unto God, the greatest
Of Majesties, I owe
Obedience first and latest,
For Justice wills it so.

HISTORY – Senior Division
THE WORLD OF PIETER BRUEGEL
1 program of 30 minutes

Prog. No.	CBC 9:30-10:00	CBLT 10:00-10:30	CHCH 9:30-10:00	CKCO 9:50-10:20	CJOH 10:00-10:30	CBOT 10:00-10:30	CKLW 10:20-10:50
1	OCT. 15 OCT. 22 MAY 13	OCT. 16	OCT. 15	OCT. 18	OCT. 18	OCT. 16	OCT. 25 MAY 30 – 10:30-11:00

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